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ABSTRACT

An argument is presented for a comprehensive and universal system of care and education for preschool children outside the family. Current institutional arrangements in the United Kingdom for government provision of education and care for young children are discussed and proposals are made for alternative ways of providing this service. It is suggested that certain traditional views of the family and its role in society are outmoded and that the position of children in society has changed. Subsection topics are: the family, children, history of provision for young children in Britain, aims of nursery education, the divided system (i.e. division between nursery care and nursery education), alternative systems, and problems of implementation. The conclusion emphasizes that problems cited are not unique to Britain but are common to almost all industrial societies. The realities of the high cost of outside care and education are also underlined. (BF)

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THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE CARE AND EDUCATION SERVICE FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Introduction

1. The main aim of this paper is to make the case for a comprehensive and universal system of care and education for children in their earliest years before they start compulsory schooling. I want to make this case first in terms of the need to leave behind traditional and now outmoded views of the family and its role in society. I also want to mention changes in the position of children in society, not just at an early age but later too. Second, I want to discuss critically the institutional arrangements currently made to provide education and care for young children in the United Kingdom. In the light of these criticisms proposals will be made about alternative ways of providing this service. Current developments which may make it easier to achieve these changes will be touched on, as well as the various difficulties which stand in their way. There are then two main issues at stake: the need for the provision of education and care for young children outside the family at all; and the best way of making this provision available.

The Family

2. There are many institutions in our society the man from Mars would find hard to understand. Foremost among these, I suspect, is the nuclear family. What would he make of the extraordinary arrangement of man, woman and young living boxed off from other human animals in isolated units each with their own set of material hardware; machines for keeping food cold, machines for heating it up, machines for transporting themselves from one place to another, moving picture machines for entertaining themselves and so on. Having been told that man is a social animal, he would find all this "privatization" perplexing.

3. In adapting to changing technology, human societies have reordered certain fundamental relationships in a way that may not be altogether desirable. Industrialisation required a mobile work force, and small units are more mobile than large units, so larger extended families sharing the same household became rare. Nuclear families of parents and children have replaced them. But although to seek to return to the extended family would not be realistice or perhaps even desirable, are we satisfied with this replacement?

4. On arriving, the man from Mars might consult a member of the new priesthood, a professional sociologist, about what the family was meant to do. He would be told that its functions are the regulation of sexual behaviour, reproduction, and the socialisation of children. Others would tell him that normal families consist of Daddies, who are breadwinners and heads of households, and Mummies, who are responsible for rearing the young, and looking after the domestic needs of their menfolk, and children, usually two of them, who grow up loving each other and their Daddy and Mummy. He would find assumptions about this so-called normal family affecting all sorts of things ranging from the uniformity of the buildings put up for people to live in - designed for parents and two children - to the organisation of work - based on the notion that fathers will work all day outside the home and mothers will not.

5. But further observation and questioning would reveal that much of what the sociologist had described goes on outside the nuclear family. Mars man would soon discover all manner of sexual activity taking place beyond the bounds of the marital bed. He would observe illegitimacy, and refusal to reproduce on the part of young married people, who in the past automatically did so; and he would find the system of socialising children within the family under strain.

6. If he were good at analysing what his antennae had picked up he would conclude that things are not what they are made out to be. He would find that cant, hypocrisy and humbug abounds about families. Many people no longer live in normal families, such families are not normal in the statistical but only in the folklore sense. Either people live in groups with a different structure, or they live in groups which have a conventional family structure but different roles for their members, of which the most important is that women are also breadwinners. And where people do live in such families it is for relatively short periods of their lives, and there is a good deal of dissatisfaction with the arrangement. What is "normal" is not necessarily desirable.

7. What needs to be recognised is that although it is still alive, the nuclear family is not very well. I suspect it never has been, but we have reached the point where we should be more honest and less hypocritical about it than in the past. For ever increasing numbers of people, alternative arrangements suit them better. The sickness can be diagnosed as too much emotional dependency on the part of its members on each other, which leads to unmet expectations and conflict; organisational inadequacy due to an over-rigid separation of roles

between men and women; and methods of bringing up children (isolated mother solely responsible for care of children), which are extremely costly to the individual and society when they go wrong, which is quite frequent.

8. As far as the alternatives are concerned, there is a need to move from perceiving these as outrageously deviant and the deserving subjects of stigma to perceiving them as socially acceptable. Why should not single men or single women live alone with their children without attracting social disapproval? Why should not several families pool their resources and live together without having to overcome almost invincible barriers in securing accommodation to do so? Why should not lesbians with children by a previous relationship be able to live with them and their girl friends unmolested by disapproving neighbours?

9. Another characteristic of the nuclear family is that it quite often breaks up and reforms with slightly different membership. Literature abounds with stories of the wicked stepmother or stepfather. The step-parent role is sometimes a difficult one to handle, but this is mainly because of the possessiveness and over-exclusiveness of the natural parent-child relationship. The growth of serial monogamy makes it all the more important that this should change. When my own marriage ended my son said he hoped I would not marry again, because like David Copperfield he might be ill-treated and horror of horrors, in the event of my death sent to boarding school. Nearly three years later, older, more mature and less impressed by traditional novelists' conceptions of tyrannical step-parents, he recently announced that he hoped I would marry again, because it would be great to have two Mums and two Dads. Right on! The moral is that there is no such thing as a normal family and it is high time we all recognised that. So those that argue that normal families can look after their young children without any support from the state, and that most families are normal, are wrong. They are making false assumptions about the nature of today's family.

Children

10. What is a child? Is there an easily defined group called children? Does the concept of childhood have any easily and widely understood meaning? And if so, is it meaningful and useful to subdivide it making use of categories such as infancy or adolescence or indeed the pre-school child or the "under fives" as they tend to be called in Britain? A child might be defined as a biologically

and socially immature human being. Indeed the characteristic of immaturity is the only thing they have in common. However the degrees of dependence promoted by immaturity will vary greatly according to the age of the child and to many other factors in the social context of the particular child. Nor is maturity easy to define or clearly related to individual circumstances. Some children reach biological maturity several years earlier than others. The relationship of biological maturity to intellectual and social maturity is also an uncertain one. This is true at the individual level and is also true of societal responses. Thus, although puberty is reached earlier than in the past, the social definition of childhood has to some extent been extended as a result of higher expectations about maturity. Thus in Britain a fifteen year old today is considered insufficiently mature to leave school and enter employment. He is still too much of a "child" to do so. Again in Britain a three year old is considered ready to leave his parents for part of the day and a five year old is considered ready to learn to read. In some other cultures the points in time in which children are considered ready to undertake these things are either earlier or later. In other words they are at least in part socially determined.

11. From the point of view of policy the special characteristic of children is that they are dependent and therefore require protection, and those that are directly responsible for them, usually parents, require support to enable them to provide adequate protection. For a variety of reasons one of the most important of which is the survival of nearly all children to adulthood in contrast to what happened in the past, we have become a much more child-centred society in the twentieth century than previously. This is reflected in a whole range of government policies designed to protect children and to support families with children. As Titmuss put it "in the nineteenth century parents had rights, in the twentieth century children have rights". But in spite of the great increase in child-centredness there are many circumstances in which children's rights are insufficiently protected, and there are many children who suffer serious emotional and sometimes physical damage, which in extreme cases may even lead to death. There are a great many more children, who, although not exposed to the most severe deprivation, live in environments which leave much to be desired, and are far below the standards expected by most members of the society for

their children. Some of the faults in their environments are not easily remedied by small-scale limited changes in policy. They are a function of deep-seated and fundamental social inequalities which cannot be eliminated without sweeping social change. Others are a direct result of insufficient concern and insufficient imagination in government policy and could be remedied quite easily. The lack of facilities for young children is a good example of this.

12. But in coping with the problem of rearing children in present day societies, governments are faced with a variety of competing claims on what are inevitably limited resources. As well as having to balance the claims made by quite other social groups, such as the elderly, the sick or the handicapped, they are faced with difficult choices about priorities within the general area of provision for children. Some of the changed attitudes I have described have unfortunate as well as fortunate consequences which lead to further calls on the state. One of the results of changing ideologies with respect to the rights of children has been the development of a more permissive approach to the socialisation of children. As a result patterns of authority have changed with adolescent children refusing to accept some of the rules of behaviour required of them by adults. At the same time they are financially dependent on adults for a longer period than in the past. The conflicts involved are likely to generate growing tensions within the school and the family. The transition from school to work may also be more difficult to accomplish than in the past. This change also has implications for the handling of deviant behaviour, in particular crime, among young people.

13. In Britain a higher proportion of young people leave school for employment without further access to education than in many other industrial societies. The transition from school to work is unnecessarily abrupt, with insufficient preparation beforehand, and inadequate training and further education opportunities afterwards for many young people. We need to explore policies to make this transition less abrupt, and to improve the information young people have about employment. Examples of such policies are work experience programmes in schools, which make it possible for young people to be released from school to work, or the right to one day a week paid release from work for further education. All this costs money and makes it more difficult to advance at the pre-school stage. Both are equally legitimate goals of policy.

14. However, pressures from so many legitimate quarters do not, in my view, excuse the poor record of the governments of all industrial societies in meeting the needs of their young children. They cannot be regarded as the only explanation for this failure either. It must also be remembered that these pressures take place against a background of ideological conflict about how much should be left to the private individual and how much should be provided by the state. As will be obvious from what has been said so far, my contention is that we have erred on the side of a laissez faire view of these matters for too long.

The History of Provision for Young Children in Britain

15. That the state has a duty to protect and provide for young children is not a new idea, but the history of the development of a coherent policy towards young children has been a chequered one. Two strands can be identified in the nineteenth century origins of pre-school education. The first of these is the Froebelian kindergarten, based on certain ideas about the education of young children through play, and in its early implementation in Britain, largely confined to the middle class. The second is the drive, based on humanitarian ideals and the need for social control, to bring slum children off the streets, which resulted in 600,000 children aged three and four in the infant schools by 1906. This amounted to 40 per cent of the age group, and it is interesting to examine the reasons why such large numbers of children of pre-compulsory school age did not continue to receive schooling. In 1905 the women inspectors of the Board of Education produced a report deploring the conditions in which these small children were being taught, and stating that they derived no intellectual benefit from the mechanical and formal teaching involved. They proposed that some other kind of school should be established, where children under five from poor families might attend. This was reiterated by another Board of Education Committee in 1907, and it was decided to call these institutions nursery schools. The Committee recommended that children under five should not continue to attend elementary schools, and that nursery schools should be set up where they were needed. The government acted on the first recommendation but not on the second. The most interesting statement in these reports was that where possible, a child should remain at home with its parents. The view of nursery education as rescue work to save children first from ill-health and later from educational failure prevailed. If home conditions were satisfactory, children should remain there. Thus it was not until the second world war

that any major expansion took place, in spite of the fact that permissive legislation had been passed in 1918 (significantly at the end of another world war), allowing local education authorities to establish nursery schools and classes.

16. With the advent of war, the demand for women in the labour force resulted in a change in attitude about the desirability of pre-school education, so that by the end of the war there were approximately 15 times as many children in nurseries as in 1939. The Labour Party had traditionally supported the development of nursery education as an equaliser of opportunity, and the post war Labour government might have been expected to have given the implementation of the clauses referring to nursery education in the 1944 Act high priority. But the shortages of teachers and school buildings prevented this, so that by the time the Conservatives returned to power there were fewer nurseries than at the end of the war. From 1956 the central Government discouraged local authorities from expanding their nursery places because, it argued, the compulsory sector must take precedence. This policy was relaxed slightly in 1964 and 1965 when permission was given to establish new nursery classes as long as they released a specified number of mothers to return to teaching. Under the urban programme, set up in 1968, there was a further small increase in nursery schools and classes in deprived areas.

17. In 1972 the Government announced that nursery education would be expanded. In a White Paper laying out a strategy for educational growth over the next decade they set out a programme for expansion, which would entail all children aged 3 and 4 receiving part-time nursery education by the early 1980's, if their parents wanted it. They accepted the Plowden Report's recommendation that demand should be fully met, and its estimates that the demand would amount to approximately 90 per cent of the parents of four year olds and 50 per cent of the parents of three year olds wanting their children to attend. Attendance would be either in the morning or in the afternoon, except for a minority of 15 per cent in each age group (three year olds and four year olds), who would be able to attend for the whole school day. The form of expansion was to be nursery classes attached to ordinary primary schools for children aged five to eleven rather than separate nursery schools. Unfortunately within two years of the start of this programme of expansion, it has been slowed down to virtually nil growth, as a result of large public expenditure cuts designed to help deal with our economic problems. Perhaps, however, in the long term this halting

of expansion will be less undesirable than it appears at first sight. It provides an opportunity to think again about the aims of the policy and whether they can best be met by expansion in this form.

Aims of Nursery Education

18. The traditional aims of nursery education in this country are as follows. They are to provide for the child one or two years of regular attendance, not necessarily full time, at an educational institution before he starts compulsory schooling. In this setting he will be given the opportunity of meeting other children and will be encouraged to learn to co-operate with them and to accept the requirements of being one of a large number. He will be given more specific social training in tasks like dressing himself and eating in socially accepted ways. His emotional development is encouraged by improving his self-confidence, enhancing his independence, teaching him to curb aggressive impulses and so on. His intellectual development will be stimulated too, by the provision of equipment and materials designed to promote motor and perceptual skills, and by music, poetry, stories and games, which directly or indirectly are designed to improve linguistic ability and develop imagination and creativity. Outdoor equipment is used to help physical development. The aim is to consolidate the home in all these respects, not to replace it. But it recognises that all the requirements of young children, intellectual, social and emotional can only in the rarest of instances be entirely provided by the home. This is the case for universal part-time educational provision for all children before compulsory schooling begins.

19. Much of this is thoroughly laudable and above criticism. However, it neglects a crucial element in today's situation: a substantial and indeed growing minority of children require much more than part-time education - they require full-time care as well. The policy is in fact based on the notion of the "normal family" which I criticised earlier. It does not, for example, take sufficient account of the needs of the increasing numbers of single-parent families of the needs of important minority groups such as the West Indians where there is a long tradition of female employment. Nor does it give sufficient recognition to the needs of working mothers in general. The attitude of the Plowden Committee in Children and their primary schools (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967) towards this issue was ambivalent. It piously declared that it was not the job of the educational system to encourage women to work. It argued that "low priority should be given to full time

nursery education for children whose mothers cannot satisfy the authorities that they have exceptionally good reasons for working", implying disapproval of working mothers. Yet, at the same time, it undertook complicated calculations to ascertain the economic return of nursery education through the opportunities it offered for the release of married women to return to work. There are two senses in which its attitude towards the relation between female employment and nursery education can be criticised. On ideological grounds it can be criticised for clinging to traditional views about mother's place in the home, which allow women little chance to choose whether they wish to work or not. The majority of mothers of young children will not, but a significant minority will either need or want employment outside the home. On pragmatic grounds it can be criticised for taking a stance against a social trend which is growing fast, which could not be prevented anyway and which must be taken into consideration by the relevant social services.

The Divided System

20. Up till recently it has been assumed that the place for children who need care rather than education is in day nurseries. However, they are few in number and fall far short of meeting the demand for places; they are not even able to meet the need in highly deserving or even desperate cases. They are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security at the central government level and are run by social services departments at the local level, in contrast to the nursery classes, which are the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science and run by the local education authorities. Whether this split in responsibility should continue is questionable. Even more questionable is the notion of separate provision for a minority of children in institutions providing care, whilst the rest are in institutions providing education. This division is particularly undesirable in circumstances, in which only the educational provision is expanding, whilst the number of day nurseries remains static. The obvious solution of expanding the day nurseries as well would not be the best one. This would leave a small proportion of largely underprivileged children outside the educational system in separate institutions that could even become stigmatised, because of their predominantly deprived clientele.

21. Before considering alternatives to this split system it should be made clear that large numbers of children under five in Britain leave their homes during the day to go to neither day nurseries nor nursery classes. Some of them go to pre-school play groups. These are mainly run by voluntary organisations or by parents, some, but by no means all of them, obtaining some subsidy from public funds. Their supervision is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security. Playgroups are a predominantly, though not exclusively, middle class alternative to nursery education. Others go to child-minders. They are a predominantly working class alternative to day care. Child-minders have grown up to fill the gap left by the insufficient number of day nursery places. Women take children into their own homes making private arrangements with their mothers and charging them for the service they provide. In theory child-minders are meant to register with the local authority social services departments, as a result of which they are subject to inspection. In practice many of them are unregistered and many abuses take place. Overcrowding and neglect often leads to physical ill-health and emotional disturbance - occasionally it has even led to children's deaths. Although playgroups have done an invaluable job in filling the gap left by lack of nursery education, they tend to have certain disadvantages in relation to nursery classes: lack of continuity; less professional expertise; poorer equipment and so on. The disadvantages of the current system of child-minding are palpable.

Alternative Systems

22. There are a variety of possible modifications which might be made to the existing system. These are as follows -

a. Separate nursery centres which combine the facilities of the day nursery, the playgroup, and the nursery class run jointly by education and social services departments. There are two possible disadvantages to this: administrative complexities caused by dual responsibilities; and lack of continuity as a result of separating the centres from the schools.

b. Day nurseries for the under threes (run by social services) and nursery classes for the over threes with an extended day for children who require longer care because their mothers are at work (run by education). This has the drawback that some children change establishment at three

but the advantage that it increases the number of places in existing day nurseries by removing children over three from them. From the bureaucrat's point of view it has the advantage of requiring the least administrative and organisational upheaval.

c. Unification of pre-school provision under the education departments. The falling birth rate means that places are available in primary schools which could accommodate not just a nursery class but a unit taking children under three. Such an arrangement would provide a continuous educational experience. Its main disadvantage is that the educational system is not at present geared to the care of infants, nor to year-round full-time care.

d. Unification of pre-school provision under the social services departments. It would admit of playgroup provision for the majority and day nursery provision for the small minority of the disadvantaged. But provision may not then have a satisfactory educational content, and the disadvantaged would be segregated in day nurseries.

e. Family day care using community resources eg child-minders organised by the local authorities for children who need all day care. The child would be taken to the local nursery class by the child-minder when it reached the age of three, but continue to be looked after by her after school hours. This would be economic but there is the danger that the child-minder remains isolated, and sometimes they themselves are disadvantaged. Some institutional support would be needed, in the form of training and advice for the minders.

f. Non-institutional provision for children under three and nursery classes for those over three. Educational visitors bring toys and equipment into the homes to instruct the mother how best to encourage her children to play. Mothers could be encouraged to bring their children to toddlers' clubs. This alternative is often put forward as a way of providing a more stimulating environment for under-privileged children, it would not, however, help children whose mothers are in employment.

g. Day nurseries provided by employers at the work place. This is a popular proposal among those who wish to save public expenditure. Its weakness is that employers could exploit mothers who are dependent on places for their children; and there are problems of transporting children some distance; nor does it solve the problem of separating off the children of working mothers into non-educational provision. Consequently there are grave doubts about this course.

23. Of these various possibilities, the one which in the long term probably has the most potential as a comprehensive system, which can meet the needs of all children effectively is the third listed above: unification under the education authorities. It is vital that there should be an educational element to the care of children under five; provision that is purely custodial is nowadays unacceptable to all the parties concerned in decisions about it. Edcuation authorities must therefore play an important role whatever system is adopted. Integrated provision under the auspices of the education authorities has the added advantage of providing the child with continuity. Whether the child needs full-time care from infancy or starts part-time education sometime between the age of three and four he will have the opportunity of a continuous unbroken experience in the same institution. The primary or first school would thus cater for children from birth or soon after through to the age of seven or eight. The number of infants will clearly be much smaller than the number of five year olds: what can be expected is a growing number of children as we precede up the age range. The hours children attend would also vary greatly according to their family's circumstances. Flexibility and ingenuity is consequently required from professional and other staff working in the first schools.

Problems of Implementation

24. Clearly there would be a number of difficulties in implementing integrated and comprehensive provision of this kind: professional opposition; political and administrative empire building; and problems of resource allocation with respect to both manpower and buildings. It may be difficult to persuade teachers, in particular infant and primary school heads, to take on responsibility for children under three, which they have not had before. Some in service training

will be necessary to allow them to do this. Many teachers will resent an extension to the school day. Local councillors and administrators with a concern for the social services may not be willing to let part of their present responsibilities be handed over to education departments. There may be difficulties in putting up new buildings or converting existing ones, and using staff, such as nursery nurses, who have been trained to work in one context in another. However, none of these difficulties seem insuperable.

25. There are also in constrast some current developments, which should make expansion in this way easier. Over the next 10 years, as a result of the continuous decline in the birth rate since 1964, the number of school pupils is expected to fall substantially from its present level of around nine million to between seven and eight million. This is in marked contrast to the large increase in pupil numbers (from seven million to nine million) over the last ten years. The extent of the fall depends on whether the birth rate remains at its present low level, continues to fall or starts to pick up. But in spite of these elements of uncertainty, the position is to a large extent determined by the lower number of children already born, and a large drop in the future school population can be confidently predicted on this basis alone. As a result there will be spare capacity, some of which might be used to extend the primary schools downwards.

26. Nevertheless overcoming some of the difficulties described above will require a great deal of co-operation and communication between the various departments involved at both local and central level - contact which in the past has been all too infrequent. Whilst not opting for the radical approach I have suggested, the government has recently made a start by issuing a Circular to local authorities encouraging greater co-operation, so that at the very least the various departments know what their opposite numbers in other departments are planning. There has also been a more general central government initiative to improve the co-ordination of the social services, which may provide a useful backcloth against which the kind of changes I am proposing might take place, and I should like to briefly describe this.

27. The Central Policy Review Staff, or Think Tank as it is colloquially known, published a paper in 1975 entitled the "Joint Framework for Social Policies". The Central Policy Review Staff is a small multi-disciplinary staff in the Cabinet Office and was set up by the Heath Government in 1971. Its job is to

enable Ministers to take better policy decisions by -

a. Helping them to work out the implications of their basic strategy in specific areas;

b. Establishing the relative priority to be given to different elements of the government's programme;

c. Identifying areas in which new options could be exercised;

d. Ensuring that the underlying implications of all courses of action are fully analysed and considered.

One common thread running through many Central Policy Review Staff activities has been a concern with subjects involving more than one government department. It is particularly concerned that the activities of different departments complement and do not contradict each other. In principle government policies in social and other fields are "integrated" by the Cabinet and other committees of Ministers. In practice, these bodies spend much of their time dealing with specific issues, often at short notice and in isolation from each other; relatively little sustained effort has been given to looking across the field at the inter-relationships between different policies. This is particularly true of social policies which are complex and inter-related, yet the responsibility of many different departments. And within the area of social policy provision for the under fives is a good example of the need for better co-ordination. There is not only the unfortunate administrative split, based on an undesirable separation of the concepts of care and education, between the Departments of Education and Health and Social Security. There is also a conflict of policy between the Home Office and the Department of Employment, which on grounds of anti-sex discrimination, and the extension of the pool of available labour wish to ensure that women's right to work is a reality and that of the Department of Health and Social Security, which has opposed the expansion of day nurseries, because it considers young children are best cared for by their mothers, who should not be encouraged to work.

28. The aim of the Joint Framework for Social Policies is to create a climate in which there will be much greater awareness of the need for co-ordination. Basically it hopes to make social policies more effective, and one way of achieving this is to make sure that resources are used in the most efficient way, so that different services complement each other without either overlaps or conflicts of objectives. Its method is to choose a limited number of topics and conduct short analytical reviews on them, which end with recommendations for change, rather than to try to devise a single comprehensive framework within which all social policies could be related to each other. The aim is to choose topics which are both significant in themselves and seem likely to lead to conclusions which could be applied elsewhere. One kind of topic that is being studied is a client group - so far the disabled of working age has been selected. An equally appropriate client group would be pre-school children. However, even if this is not selected for study at some future date, there could well be some spin-off from the climate established by the Joint Framework for Social Policies' work. There are grounds for at least some optimism that decision makers and professionals will begin to see the need for a more integrated approach to defining needs of young children and their parents and making provision available.

Conclusion

29. There are two final points to be made before concluding this paper. The first is that the problems outlined are not uniquely present in Britain: nearly all industrial societies are grappling with them. The United States and most countries in Western Europe neither meet demand nor need in providing for pre-school children. And many of them have not managed to devise a satisfactory way of meeting demand and need for various kinds of children. Although I know little about it, I suspect Australia is no exception. Perhaps the most important underlying difficulty is that a policy for provision for young children must inevitably have multiple objectives - and as soon as multiple objectives are accepted, it is hard to avoid running into difficulties in meeting them.

30. My second point is of a rather different kind. It is that there is no way of escaping from the fact that the education and care of young children outside their own homes is expensive. This is perhaps an obvious point, but in a paper on policy and its unplementation it would be irresponsible not to mention it. Although I have allowed myself the luxury of eschewing calculations of cost,

we must always have these at the back of our minds. As I mentioned earlier there are many competing claims for scarce resources, and in asking Britain at least, they cannot all be met. However this should not be an excuse for doing nothing. A great deal can be done for our young children at rather lower cost than we should like in an ideal world. If buildings are not perfect, equipment not as good as it might be, or staffing standards not as high as we would like, this is a pity, but managing in such a situation is usually in my view better than doing nothing at all. Of course certain minimum standards must be observed. However, a great deal can be done with more limited resources than we would like in an ideal world.

31. This paper has tried to make a case for comprehensive education and care for young children before they start school. It has suggested that all families can benefit from some support in the rearing of their young children, and that some will need much more than this. It has suggested that those who need much more should not be separated from those who need less. In conclusion I want to add that as well as wanting to see a more comprehensive system of care and education in the community, I should also like to see a more comprehensive system of care and education in the home. Comprehensive care in the home means that both parents look after their children. Mothers should no longer shoulder the burden alone. Nor is the kind of support that some fathers offer enough, for example, games at the weekend or a story in bed at night. They must share the task of coping with the eating problems, the dressing problems, the wet bed or the need for love and comfort in the middle of the night. The state can never substitute for the love and care of parents except in some platonic nightmare - it can only help parents give them by providing collective systems of care for part of the time. If the care that parents give can be more equally divided between them, everyone will be better off: mothers, fathers and children.

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10 May 1976

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